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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000058

SIPDIS

REL USA AND MCFI

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TAGS: [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: PM JA,AFARI, MOI JABR, MOD DULIME BLAME COALITION  
FOR CURRENT SECURITY SITUATION

REF: BAGHDAD 00052

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ZALMAY KHALILZAD FOR REASONS 1.4 (a), (b), AND (d).

1. (S/REL) SUMMARY. Prime Minister Ja'afari, Interior Minister Jabr, and Defense Minister Dulime conveyed their concern with the increasing level of violence in Iraq since the election, particularly in and around Baghdad. As these officials relayed to the Shia Coalition "security commission" earlier in the week (see Reftel), they blame this increase on what they perceive as operational restrictions that MNF-I has placed on Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and on the Coalition's weakening stance against terrorist groups. To reverse the trend, Jabr and Dulime recommended a number of "practical solutions" for Coalition consideration.

2. (S/REL) SUMMARY CONTINUED. Ambassador Khalilzad, UK Ambassador Patey, and MNF-I Deputy Commanding General Lt Gen Houghton reiterated that the Coalition's commitment to fighting terrorism in Iraq is "absolute" and agreed to discuss further modifications to MNF-I policies that are inhibiting the ISF's ability to operate effectively and efficiently. Ambassador Khalilzad stressed that any changes to the security strategy must take into account our continued objective to isolate the terrorists and integrate the Sunni Arabs into the political process. END SUMMARY.

3. (S/REL) COMMENT: While the Coalition is treating these allegations regarding the security situation seriously, we are cautious in our assessment. The terrorists are likely trying to provoke the Shia street and the Shia-dominated government to retaliate against Sunni Arabs, thereby provoking a civil war. At the same time, the Shia Alliance could be trying to force the Coalition to take action against the Sunni Arabs, thereby removing the Sunni Arabs from the political process. This would allow the Shia Coalition to keep political compromises to a minimum in the formation of a new government. The Coalition is encouraging all sides to condemn these acts of terrorism and to tone down the rhetoric. END COMMENT.

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DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION  
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4. (C/REL) Ambassador Khalilzad, UK Ambassador Patey, and LTG Houghton on January 7 met with PM Ja'afari, MOI Jabr, and MOD Dulime. In the second part of the meeting, they were joined by Shia Coalition "security committee" members Dr. Hussein Shahrastani (Deputy Speaker of the TNA), Jawad al-Maliki (leading figure in Dawa and chairman of the National Assembly's Security and Defense Committee), and Hadi al-Amiri (Badr Corps).

5. (S/REL) PM Ja'afari described the security situation as "very serious" and turned to MOI Jabr for a security update. MOI Jabr conveyed that, since the election, all major crime indexes were up including assassinations, kidnappings, and suicide bombings and that, in the last seven days, there had been 1440 civilian injuries and deaths throughout Iraq. Based on intelligence reports, MOI Jabr projected the violence will only increase, particularly in Baghdad Sunni neighborhoods such as Dora and Adhamiyah.

6. (S/REL) LTG Houghton questioned the accuracy of the crime statistics as MNF-I reporting did not show an increase in attacks. In fact, MNF-I reporting actually showed a decrease in the number of attacks from November to December. LTG Houghton also wondered if the last few days of spectacular attacks in Karbala, Ramadi, and Diyala were really driving a perception of an out-of-control violence trend rather than demonstrating the reality of episodic major violence. Because of the divergent views, both Ambassador Khalilzad and LTG Houghton agreed with MOI Jabr and MOD Dulime that all relevant parties should conduct a joint assessment to come to a mutual understanding of the current security situation.

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MOD AND MOI BLAME MNF-I FOR SECURITY  
SITUATION AND OUTLINE "PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS"  
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17. (S/REL) MOI Jabr and MOD Dulime both acknowledged that there are sufficient forces to protect the people; however, they claim their work is being hindered by MNF-I's operational policies and its weakening stance on terrorism. As evidence of the former, MOI Jabr pointed to the fact that it took five days to gain the approval of MNF-I to strike at ten identified targets, resulting in the loss of opportunity.

As evidence of the latter, MOD Dulime identified MNF-I's opening of an ISF recruitment center in Ramadi, "the hotbed for terrorists." According to both ministers, this center was opened without their knowledge and against their advice.

18. (S/REL) Lt Gen Houghton stressed that no one in the Coalition wants to stymie the ISF. MNF-I wants to see the ISF advance and increasingly take the lead in operations. As for the opening of the recruitment center, Houghton was not familiar with this development but would discuss it with MNSTC-I Commanding General LTG Dempsey. However, LTG Houghton and Ambassador Khalilzad made clear they did not believe recruiting people from Ramadi was a sign of weakness on terrorism; MNF-I's resolve to root out terrorism in Iraq has never been stronger.

19. (S/REL) To remedy the security situation, MOI Jabr and MOD Dulime outlined a number of measures they would like to implement with cooperation from MNF-I. They suggested the following steps be taken:

--Intensify control of the twenty-two manned checkpoints throughout Baghdad and build permanent accommodations for forces next to each checkpoint.

--Increase the number of MNF-I advisors "embedded" with forces in the field to improve operations and add to the legitimacy of the ISF operations.

--Develop more efficient procedures for approving target lists, and act on intelligence more efficiently.

--Return the MOI Brigade that was moved to Ramadi and Samarra for election security purposes to Baghdad.

--Reduce publicity around human rights abuses (NOTE: Only MOI Jabr made this request. He claims the publicity is breaking the morale of his police and fear of being caught up in an investigation has led to paralysis among the police. END NOTE.)

--Mount serious operations against terrorist-filled communities such as Ramadi and put them under strict control.

110. (S/REL) Ambassador Khalilzad, UK Ambassador Patey, and LTG Houghton requested follow-on meetings with the appropriate Iraqi and MNF-I members to assess the Ministries' recommendations. Ambassador Khalilzad closed the discussion by emphasizing that, whatever modifications are adopted and actions taken, the Iraqis and the Coalition must proceed in a way that does not incite further violence, intensify the ethnic-sectarian divide, or push Iraqi citizens away from the political process and toward the terrorists.  
KHALILZAD